

Addendum to the e-Learning Profile 2006

An Update Regarding Distributed Learning in British Columbia

*Prepared for Alberta Education
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this *Addendum* is to update the information that appeared in Section 7.2 of Alberta Education's *e-Learning Profile: A Snapshot of the Alberta, Canadian, and International e-Learning Landscape* (March 2006)¹ regarding distributed learning activities in British Columbia.

2. Updated E-learning Profile in British Columbia (BC)

The BC Ministry of Education (<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca>) continues to deliver on its distributed learning framework for action as was described in Alberta Education's *e-Learning Profile*². An update of Ministry activities since early 2006 follows. The Ministry has:

- ♦ Articulated its vision, goals and challenges for distributed learning;
- ♦ Revised existing and developed new distributed learning policies;
- ♦ Established a new provincial "virtual" school (<http://www.mybcschool.gov.bc.ca/page4.aspx>) that offers a full range of courses and free online tutoring (<http://www.bcedonline.com/tutor/>) to help secondary school students across the province, especially in rural/remote areas³;
- ♦ Released standards for K-12 distributed learning in BC⁴ as well as standards for delivery of K-12 independent school distributed learning in BC⁵; and
- ♦ Released research reports on e-learning sites in BC⁶.

An overview of these activities is provided below.

2.1 Vision, Goals and Challenges

The BC Ministry of Education defined distributed learning as "[learning that] takes place when a student is primarily at a distance from the teacher, whether the student is at home or connecting to teachers from another learning facility." The Ministry also articulated its vision, goals and challenges as follows:

Vision

"Distributed Learning in British Columbia will be a quality, dynamic and engaging learning environment that all students in the province can access. It will not be limited by schedules, calendars, facilities or location. DL will provide equitable access to education, specifically providing choice for students who have restricted options, especially students in rural communities, students with special needs, and Aboriginal students."

¹ Alberta Education; *e-Learning Profile: A Snapshot of the Alberta, Canadian, and International e-Learning Landscape* (March 2006); pp. 43-53;

<<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/technology/elearning/profile.pdf>>

² Ibid.

³ News release related to February 14, 2006 Throne Speech; Retrieved September 2006,

<http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2006OTP0005-000094.htm>

⁴ BC Ministry of Education; *Standards for K-12 Distributed Learning in British Columbia*; Version 1.7, June 2006; Retrieved September 2006,

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dl_standards.pdf>

⁵ BC Ministry of Education; *Standards for Delivery of K-12 Independent School Distributed Learning in British Columbia*; June 2006; Retrieved September 2006,

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools/is_forms/dl_program/dl_standards.pdf>

⁶ LaBonte, Randy; *e-Learning Research Sites: Lessons Learned*; March 2006, Retrieved September 2006,

<http://www.bcedonline.com/2006/forms/elearning_reports/ELR_semester1.pdf>

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Goals

"The Ministry of Education aims to create a coordinated, high quality, public distributed learning system that will make BC the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent"

Challenges

*"Classroom-based education does not provide, in itself, sufficient flexibility to meet the learning needs of all BC students. Schools in rural communities may have great difficulty offering a range of courses. As a result, rural students may be denied important education choices enjoyed by students in urban centres."*⁷

For more information about the Ministries framework for action, see
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/vision.htm.

2.2 Policies

To reflect current practice in distributed learning and as part of a public policy review⁸, the BC Ministry of Education is making policy and legislative changes. Table 1 below lists the distributed learning policies that have been recently revised or newly issued. Policy statements and rationales are provided as well as links to each policy. Note: The information below was retrieved September 19th, 2006.

Table 1: BC's Distributed Learning Policies

Policy	Date Issued/Revised	Status
<u>1. Distributed Learning- General</u>	2006-07-01	Revised
Policy Statement: A school board in BC may offer distributed learning only if it has signed an agreement with the Minister. Policy Rationale: Distributed learning provides the flexibility to meet the learning needs of many BC students with conventional timetable challenges. As well, schools in rural communities may have great difficulty offering a range of courses. Distributed learning will provide equitable access to education, specifically providing choice for those students who have restricted options.		
<u>2. Distributed Learning - Active Policy</u>	2006-07-01	New
Policy Statement: Boards will report to the Ministry when students become active participants in distributed learning. The Ministry will only fund enrolled students that meet the active policy below. Policy Rationale: Active participation in distributed learning is equivalent to attendance in a school and is a requirement under the School Act, Section 1 (1).		
<u>3. Distributed Learning - BC Residency Policy</u>	2006-07-01	New
Policy Statement: School boards may provide distributed learning to students who are ordinarily residents of		

⁷ BC Ministry of Education, *A Vision for Distributed Learning*, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/vision.htm>

⁸ See information about public policy reviews at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/changes/>.

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Policy	Date Issued/Revised	Status
British Columbia, but temporarily out of province. School boards determine their own residency policy, in compliance with the Manual of School Law and Ministry of Education policy directions. Subject to conditions described below, school boards may deliver distributed learning to students who live outside of British Columbia, but within Canada. Policy Rationale: The <u>International Student Policy</u> provides some guidance in determining residency, but the focus is on students who were not previously resident in British Columbia. This policy suggests types of evidence that may assist boards in establishing their own residency rules. Section 168(3) of the School Act allows a board, with the approval of the Minister of Education, to enter into an agreement with a school authority outside British Columbia for the education of children for whom the outside authority is responsible. This policy provides the procedures a school board must follow to receive the Minister's approval.		
<u>4. Distributed Learning - Funding</u>	2006-07-01	New
Policy Statement: The Ministry of Education will fund all public distributed learning (DL) schools in the same way. A school-aged or non-graduated adult student may enroll in a distributed learning school anytime throughout the calendar year. Students in grades 10 - 12 may be enrolled in more than one program if they are enrolled in a DL school. Policy Rationale: This policy allows DL schools to enroll students after September 30 and receive funding. Prior to implementation, many DL schools did not accept new enrolments after September 30, limiting student flexibility and choice.		
<u>5. Distributed Learning - Policy for home-schoolers</u>	2006-07-01	New
Policy Statement: A child entitled to enroll in grades K-9 may enroll in only one educational program with a board or authority, or register for home-schooling at any school in the province, but not both. The board or authority that enrolls a student must provide a complete educational program, satisfying requirements established in legislation, to a student enrolled in grades K-9. Boards or authorities may make arrangements with one another to deliver an educational program to a student. For grades 10-12, a person of school age can register for home-schooling at any school in the province, and also enroll as a student in one or more distributed learning (DL) courses. However, a registered home-schooler that enrolls in a course offered through a bricks-and-mortar school (i.e., not a DL school) becomes an enrolled student, and is no longer registered as a home-schooler. Policy Rationale: Building upon the flexibility that generally exists in the Graduation Program grades, students taking instruction through distributed learning in grades 10 through 12 may now enroll in additional programs offered by boards or authorities. Many students in these grades attend school part-time, and the funding model reflects, in part, course-based programs. This flexibility extends to home-schooling.		
<u>6. Distributed Learning - Requirements and Guidelines for Students with Special Needs</u>	2006-07-01	Revised

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Policy	Date Issued/Revised	Status
Policy Statement: These requirements and guidelines apply to school boards and authorities that have signed Distributed Learning (DL) Agreements with the Ministry. Distributed learning is one option for instructing students with special needs. This policy also applies to students with special needs in a dual enrolment situation. These guidelines are not for students who are home schooled. When a distributed learning student in Grades 10, 11, or 12 who has special needs is enrolled with more than one board or authority, the Ministry will fund a single board or authority. The board or authority that identifies itself as responsible for a student's special needs services, is responsible for the IEP. All boards or authorities where a student is enrolled must be consulted regarding services and meeting IEP requirements. Distributed learning students in K-9 with special needs may enroll with only one board or authority. However, school districts may make their own arrangements to provide students with access to distributed learning. Policy Rationale: As of July 1, 2006, students in Grades 10, 11, or 12 who enroll in distributed learning courses may also enroll in other public or independent schools. This policy allows special needs students to have the same educational program options as other students while avoiding the complexity of multiple Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The funding model also retains funding equity for special needs because all students in a category, in all delivery combinations, will generate the same supplementary funding.		

2.3 *MyBCSchool – BC's Virtual School*

Plans for a province-wide virtual school were announced by the Ministry in mid-February 2006⁹. MyBCSchool is now live (see <http://www.mybcschool.gov.bc.ca/page4.aspx>) and provides the following information for students, parents and educators:

- ♦ Information about courses, programs and services available to BC students;
- ♦ Descriptions of each course (<http://www.mybcschool.gov.bc.ca/Page74.aspx>).
Province-wide courses currently being offered include: applied skills, English language arts, fine arts, health and career education, information communication technology, international languages, mathematics, physical education, sciences and social studies;
- ♦ A list of the schools offering distributed learning (see <http://www.mybcschool.gov.bc.ca/Page75.aspx>);
- ♦ A test that students can take to determine if distributed learning is right for them;
- ♦ Information about how to enroll;
- ♦ A link to online tutoring services (i.e., BC provincial exam prep); and
- ♦ A help desk as well as frequently-asked questions.

⁹ BC Ministry of Education, Office of the Premier, News Release, *Throne Speech Launches BC Spring Legislature Session*, 2006OTP0005-000094, February 14, 2006, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2006OTP0005-000094.htm>

2.4 Standards

Beginning in the spring of 2005, two working groups were created to develop standards for the fundamental components of a distributed learning program and for digital content used in a distributed environment. Both working groups, comprised of principals, teachers, education content providers, the post-secondary sector, and industry, researched globally-developed standards. They chose a 'made-in-BC' approach which was later vetted through distributed learning practitioners and posted for public consultation. Draft versions of these standards were released in early 2006. The final version of the standards¹⁰, released in summer 2006, is organized as follows:

1. Student and Parent Services
2. Student Learning
3. Governance and Leadership
4. Regulatory and Legal Compliance

Each category provides a series of statements expressing key aspects of quality.

Standards¹¹ have also been developed that are unique to distributed learning delivery for independent schools in BC (see http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools/is_forms/dl_program/dl_standards.pdf for more information).

2.5 Research

Research at e-learning sites in eight school districts throughout BC was conducted during the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years. Research results were released by BCED Online in June 2006. The research indicates that, for the most part, the eight funded sites were successful in using technology to increase access to high school courses by students in rural settings. The research¹² also indicated that all sites would benefit from:

1. Adequate research into pedagogy in an online environment, and subsequent selection of appropriate hardware and software to support that pedagogy;
2. Provision of sufficient technical and pedagogical support and training for teachers involved in the project;
3. Ensuring a back-up plan is in place in the event of technical difficulties;
4. Identification of staff willing, and having the requisite skills, to teach in the environment and with technology; and
5. Creation of opportunities for collaboration between schools and teachers involved in similar environments and projects.

The following excerpt highlights key lessons learned to date.

"Critical to successful technological implementation was not just internet connectivity, but adequate teacher preparation and school/district leadership. Managing new

¹⁰ BC Ministry of Education; *Standards for K-12 Distributed Learning in British Columbia*; Version 1.7, June 2006; Retrieved September 2006,

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dl_standards.pdf>

¹¹ BC Ministry of Education; *Standards for Delivery of K-12 Independent School Distributed Learning in British Columbia*; June 2006; Retrieved September 2006,

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools/is_forms/dl_program/dl_standards.pdf>

¹² LaBonte, Randy; *e-Learning Research Sites: Lessons Learned*; March 2006, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bcedonline.com/2006/forms/elearning_reports/ELR_semester1.pdf>; Excerpt from Executive Summary, pp. 22-23

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educational technologies requires the ability to make choices and changes, particularly as the introduction of new educational technologies affects pedagogy and influences the organization and structure of learning. The E-Learning Research Sites project leaders played key roles in systemic change, and without clear vision, collaborative leadership approaches, and strategic systems thinking, districts could end up committing precious resources to e-learning without much success.”¹³

For information about the overall structure of the project and lessons learned, see <http://www.bcedonline.com/2006/node/63>.

2.6 Summary

The BC Ministry of Education has taken an active role in what appears to be a more centralized collaborative approach to the implementation of distributed learning in the province as evidenced by its articulation of a vision; revision and development of supporting policies; launch of a provincial virtual school; issuance of distributed learning standards; and support for research.

3. References

1. Alberta Education; *e-Learning Profile: A Snapshot of the Alberta, Canadian, and International e-Learning Landscape* (March 2006); Retrieved September 2006, <<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/technology/elearning/profile.pdf>>
2. BC Ministry of Education, *A Vision for Distributed Learning*, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/vision.htm>
3. BC Ministry of Education, *Ministry Policy Site*, Retrieved September 2006, <<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/>>
4. BC Ministry of Education; *Standards for Delivery of K-12 Independent School Distributed Learning in British Columbia*; June 2006; Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/independentschools/is_forms/dl_program/dl_standards.pdf>
5. BC Ministry of Education; *Standards for K-12 Distributed Learning in British Columbia*; Version 1.7, June 2006; Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dl_standards.pdf>
6. BC Ministry of Education, Office of the Premier, News Release, *Throne Speech Launches BC Spring Legislature Session*, 2006OTP0005-000094, February 14, 2006, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2006OTP0005-000094.htm>
7. LaBonte, Randy; *e-Learning Research Sites: Lessons Learned*; March 2006, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bcedonline.com/2006/forms/elearning_reports/ELR_semester1.pdf>

¹³ LaBonte, Randy; *e-Learning Research Sites: Lessons Learned*; March 2006, Retrieved September 2006, <http://www.bcedonline.com/2006/forms/elearning_reports/ELR_semester1.pdf>; Excerpt from Executive Summary, p. 3

4. Relevant Web Sites

1. BCEd Online <<http://www.bcedonline.com>> and BCEd Online – online tutoring
<<http://www.bcedonline.com/tutor/>>
2. BC Ministry of Education <<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca>>
3. MyBCSchool <<http://www.mybcschool.gov.bc.ca/page4.aspx>>
4. Open School BC <<http://www.openschool.bc.ca/>>